

THIRD
ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

Natural History Society

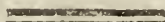
OF

MONTREAL,

DELIVERED BY THE LATE COUNCIL,

AND

Read at the Meeting of the Society, May 31, 1830.



MONTREAL:

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REPORT.

IN reviewing the condition of the Society for the past year, the Council cannot refrain in the first place from congratulating their fellow Members on the steady progress of the Institution. The efforts made by the Members are daily becoming better appreciated, and a willingness to aid the success of our establishment is manifest in all parts of the country. Donations of all kinds are directed to us, and it is believed few Institutions of a secondary order can boast of a greater variety. Among these, two call for especial notice; one, the donation of His Excellency Sir James Kemp, the Administrator of the Government; the other the donation received from the Honourable Hudson's Bay Company. His Excellency, in his desire to become acquainted with the Institutions of the city, visited, among other establishments, the Museum of this Society, and expressed his approbation of the zeal and industry of the Members, which were apparent from the collections already made, in the short time that had elapsed since the formation of the Society, and desirous to promote a cause so auspiciously begun, he was pleased to convey a handsome donation to the Society's Treasurer. The donation of the Hudson's Bay Company is also particularly gratifying, being accompanied by a promise of assistance of a kind highly important to the Society. The Honourable Company express their desire to aid the views of the Society, in obtaining all the productions of the British Possessions, and intimate their intention of contributing from time to time, to the Society's

Museum, such specimens as may be procured by their Agents in the Indian country. The very important assistance which the Society may hence expect to receive, as well as the handsome donation already in the hands of the Treasurer, may be considered one of the results proceeding from the labours of the Indian Committee of the Society. It was probably by means of the answers made to the queries of the Society, and the collections intended for it, and forwarded to England by the Company's ships, that the Company became aware of the existence of this Society: and to the knowledge thus obtained, aided, doubtless, by the information of the gentleman placed at the head of their affairs on this Continent, as to the views and condition of the Society, we are to attribute the very grateful communication we have received.

The Council have very great pleasure in having again to record a munificent donation from the Legislature of the Province. This second instance of favour shows the estimation in which the exertions of the Members are held, no less than the earnest desire of the Legislature to promote the advancement of the Sciences, by bringing together the means by which scientific attainments can be acquired. The Council of the Society would not have ventured to address the Legislature for additional assistance, had they not been well aware, that the former grant had been appropriated to purposes of public utility. They knew that the capabilities of the Society had become more developed and better known, and they judged rightly, that having an object of acknowledged utility in view, they might, with confidence, rely on the liberality of the Legislature. This object was the acquirement of an extensive collection of Minerals, which had been offered to the Society at a moderate price. The Council, keeping in mind the impropriety of involving the Society in a heavy debt, however useful the purpose for which this debt was to be incurred, delayed deciding upon the offer, or rather decided not to accept the offer,

unless an application to the authorities of the Province should prove successful; a result they sanguinely anticipated from the desire always manifested by the Legislature to facilitate the means of Education. Time has shewn, that they did not calculate on wrong assumptions, and in the recent grant of Two Hundred Pounds, the Society has itself put in possession of means to acquire a handsome collection of Minerals, an object of interest, not only as forming a part of the Society's Museum, but as being probably a chief step towards exciting a love for Mineralogical Science, and as removing one of the most powerful obstacles to its cultivation. An arranged collection of well characterized and authentically named specimens must form a powerful incitement towards the cultivation of Mineralogy, and the liberal conduct of the Society, in allowing free access upon all occasions to the public, will render the expected benefit available in the highest degree.

As the order employed in former Reports appears to allow of the details being brought forward in the clearest manner, it will again be adopted, and the Council will notice the changes which have occurred during the year under the three heads of—1st. *The Museum.* 2d. *The Library.* 3d. *Miscellanea.*

I. THE MUSEUM.

The sub-divisions of Natural History necessarily give rise to an equal number of divisions in the arrangement of the objects collected. They are classed under the heads of Animal, Vegetable, and Mineral Kingdoms, to which a fourth class is added to include objects of art, curiosity or interest, not properly placed under either of the other three.

In the first sub-division, that of the Animal Kingdom, the Council have not been able to carry the augmentation to the extent contemplated by the last Annual Report. This was occasioned in a great degree, by the want of a person properly qualified to prepare the specimens; a want which

it was not thought necessary to remove at the time, because the return of the Artist, who had already been employed and had given satisfaction, was early looked for; circumstances causing delay prevented his return from England till a late period in the last year, and, in consequence, the Museum has not exhibited the rapid increase which was expected. This is, however, only a temporary evil, which the ensuing year will probably remedy.

The following enumeration will shew the increase during the year:—

The Quadrupeds now amount to 39, being an increase of 6.

Birds now amount to 335, being an increase of 59.

Fishes, Reptiles, &c. now amount to 74, being an increase of 23.

Insects have been increased by a donation of specimens collected by Lieutenant Ingall, 15th Regiment, during the late expedition from the St. Maurice to the Ottawa.

The Shells have not experienced any addition.

Besides the specimens enumerated in the different catalogues, the Council have to remark that a considerable number of Animals, especially Birds, are in the possession of the Society, and are retained as duplicates to serve any purpose that may be judged expedient.

In the Botanical Department, the expectation indulged in, in the last Annual Report, has not been disappointed. An addition of two Herbaria has been made; one containing 500 specimens in the finest preparation and of the largest size, and forming (exclusive of the Grasses, Grass-like Plants and Trees,) a nearly complete Flora of the environs of this city. The other contains 250 species of Plants, cultivated in the gardens around the city, and similar to the former in size and beauty. The Council regret to state that a small collection of Plants, made by the gentlemen of the St. Maurice and Ottawa Expedition, owing to the difficulties of the journey, arrived in too bad a condition to be of any advantage.

The number of Minerals now in our catalogue, and which comprehend both Geological and Mineralogical specimens, amounts to 1401, being an increase of 190. From the circumstances under which these were obtained, there will be found many specimens of trifling value. Many are of small size or poorly characterized,* and many are duplicates, and have been retained only till better specimens could be procured. Whenever a change of situation occurs, it will become necessary to weed out those which are of an inferior description, and their places will be supplied by others of a more perfect appearance. The number of specimens forms no criterion of the value of a collection, and hence the necessity, the Council considered themselves under, of endeavouring to procure a better assortment. Among the specimens, however, belonging to the Society, are many of a superior character, and as no benefit could arise from the purchase of duplicates, it is intended to reject from the collection to be purchased, those of which we are in possession of similar specimens. Among the donors of Minerals, the Council think right to mention the name of Martyn Paine, M.D. of New York, whose specimens are among the finest and largest in the Society's Cabinet.

Under the fourth department are ranged Miscellaneous and objects of Curiosity. An increase is shown of 67, making the total number of 151, divided into objects of Art 95, and objects of Natural History 23. In addition, however, the Council will, for the first time, mention that the Society possess a considerable number of Coins, ancient and modern, the majority certainly of no great value, but always useful in an extensive collection, while a few are valuable as antiquities or as historical records.

The proper method of exhibiting them to advantage so as to insure their safety, and at the same time to allow the inspection of both sides of the medal, has engaged the Council's attention, and will hereafter be acted upon, when the enlarge-

ment of the room shall admit of a proper exhibition of the Society's stores. It will suffice at present to say that of Coins and Medals, there are 2 of Gold, 105 of Silver, 185 of Copper, and 5 of Bronze, forming a total of 297.

II. THE LIBRARY.

The Council are happy to bear testimony to the zeal shewn by many of the Members, in augmenting this department. The number of Books has been more than tripled. Of these the larger number amounting to 172 volumes has been procured by purchase, the funds being afforded by the appropriation of part of the Legislative grant of 1829, but no less than 47 volumes have been presented as donations, chiefly by a few of the Members, but not unfrequently by other persons unconnected with the Society, yet still desirous of contributing to its success.

The total number of Books procured during the year is 219, which, added to those received during the preceding years, form a total of 365 volumes.

III. MISCELLANEA.

Under the third head, the Council will first consider the number of Members who have, in various ways, withdrawn from the Society, and of those who have been added during the year. This enumeration is of much importance, because, as the funds of the Society are derived chiefly from the subscriptions of the Ordinary Members, any increase or decrease in their number will materially affect the prosperity of the Society. The number of Ordinary Members belonging to the Society and contributing to its funds was, at the last Anniversary, eighty-seven, in which, of course, were not included those who, from absence, were no longer to be called upon for contribution. For several reasons it was considered expedient to divide the class of Ordinary Members into Resident and Non-Resident, the latter being exempted from contribution. The number of Mem-

bers included under this denomination amounts to fifteen, but the list will be subject to much fluctuation, for several may again return among us, while the names of others now contributing will require to be withdrawn from the paying list and transferred to that of Non-Residents. Previous to the adoption of this law, Members quitting this city were entitled upon application to be enrolled as Corresponding Members, but the present arrangement is undoubtedly preferable. The number of Members belonging to the Society has been reduced by departures and by deaths to eighty-one; but to make up for this loss there have been added fifteen Ordinary Members, so that the total of Members now contributing to the funds is ninety-six. There has been elected but one Honorary Member, and there have been added fourteen Corresponding Members to the Society's list. The total number of Honorary Members now is twenty-four, and of Corresponding Members, eighty-eight.

The Council will now advert to the subject of the Medals, and to the decision upon the Essays presented to the Society. The success attending this part of the Society's plan has not equalled the expectations formed. Only six Essays, three Scientific and three Literary, were presented for competition: and it is to be regretted that the subjects pointed out by the Society did not obtain a greater share of attention, and secure a more numerous list of competitors. On one of the subjects, "The Plants of Canada," it was confidently anticipated that several Essays would be given in, because it was known that many persons, natives or long resident in the Provinces, had turned their attention to Botanical pursuits. On the other subject, "The Quadrupeds of Canada," but one Essay has been received, and the Council are happy to find, it was thought worthy the prize for which it was offered. The Council beg leave to add, that it is of essential importance that much care should be had in awarding their prizes, for indis-

criminate donation would effectually put a stop to all the benefits expected to arise from the plan adopted. The Medals must be withheld, except from Essays of such character as may bear the scrutiny of foreign countries, because no value could hereafter be attached to a distinction conferred without proper merit. At the same time the Council do not wish it to be inferred, that they are of opinion that no Essay should receive a prize unless it be of the highest character. They keep in mind the condition of these Provinces, and are aware that as in most other things, so in scientific and literary acquirements, we are below the level of other countries: a circumstance, however much to be regretted,—not at all to be wondered at, when the newness of the country is considered, the imperious obligation of first securing the necessary comforts of life, and above all, the difficulties attending the acquirement of the higher branches of Education. The Council, therefore, do not wish to be considered as recommending the Medals to be awarded only in the case of Essays being presented, remarkably for originality, for depth of research, or elegance of composition. To fix so high a standard would prove an effectual barrier to the object in view. They keep in mind that the Society, in offering prizes, desired to *excite* a spirit of research, and to turn the attention of the inhabitants of these Provinces, more strongly to literary and scientific pursuits. A moderate degree of merit, therefore, is all that the Council judge necessary to secure the prizes offered; and as some measure may be devised of the amount of merit required, it may be considered that whatever cannot bear the ordeal of public criticism, and be considered worthy of publication in the Transactions of the Society, must be below the standard adopted.

The last subject, which the Council thinks necessary to consider, is the state of the finances. By the Report of a Committee appointed at the April Meeting and communicated to the Council,

it appears that all the debts of the Society have been liquidated, and that a balance remains in the hands of the Treasurer to no less an amount than £471 14s. It is necessary to remark, however, with a view to prevent misconception, that of this large sum, by far the greatest portion is derived from the Legislative grant of the present year, and the unexpended balance of that of the former year, which sums, though unexpended, are appropriated to certain specific purposes, and come not within the regular annual receipts of the Society. Another sum £42 1 6 is included in the Treasurer's statement, raised by a course of Lectures delivered during the past winter, and which is also exclusively devoted to the purchase of philosophical apparatus. Deducting therefore the sum of £200 voted by the Legislature during the last Session, and £125 1 6 the unexpended balance of the grant of 1829, and likewise £42 1 6 raised by Lectures, there will remain a balance of £104 11 applicable to the general purposes of the Society. Although it is thought advisable thus to separate the regular income from that which the Council wish to consider as in some measure out of their controul, yet it will readily be perceived that in fact no essential difference exists between the money obtained in the one way and in the other. The large additions to their ordinary funds only enable the Society to carry into effect several very important undertakings, which, otherwise, they would be totally incapable of accomplishing.

The Council believe that the Society's affairs will appear, by the preceding Report, to have been prosperously conducted during the year which has just elapsed, and they resign their trust in the fervent hope, that, from year to year, statements equally satisfactory may be presented.

By order of the Council,

A. F. HOLMES, M. D.
Chairman.

Montreal, May 31, 1830.

FOURTH
ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
COUNCIL
OF THE
NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,
FOR 1830-31.

Read on the 18th May, 1831.



MONTREAL:
PRINTED AT THE MONTREAL GAZETTE OFFICE,
25, Notre Dame Street.

1831.

REPORT.

THE Members of the Council of the Natural History Society beg leave to submit to their fellow Members a brief report of the condition of the Society, and the proceedings which have characterised the past year. This Institution has now reached its fourth anniversary, and appears therefore to have surmounted those difficulties that have stifled the attempts of former associations. The Council is of opinion that this result is owing in a great degree to the measure so judiciously adopted at the outset, of forming a Museum and Library. The extent to which these have arrived, (considering the small period elapsed since they were commenced,) is considerable, and they form a bond by which the Members are held together, and without which probably much of the interest now excited by the view of the collections, (a property in which belongs to each individual Member,) would be destroyed. But even when the zeal of some shall have cooled, it is not to be doubted that the very circumstance of the value of the collections will be a stimulus to many others, by whose exertions any want of will on the part of original Members will be made up.

The Society has laboured under a considerable disadvantage during the last year, in being compelled to remain in a room, by no means fitted for the purpose of a Museum, and in consequence,

there have been no means of keeping up that due regularity, arrangement and attention, which are necessary ingredients in conducting such an institution. The Cabinet must have suffered in the eyes of visitors, because from the impossibility of avoiding the crowding together of a great number of objects, and the consequent difficulty of any thing like a classification, unfavourable impressions might have been taken up regarding the care and attention bestowed upon the Society's duties. The Council is happy to be able to express its hope that this objection will not in future exist, it having, with the Society's approbation, procured much more extensive rooms, and in a more eligible situation. The house, rented by the Society from the Medical Faculty of M'Gill College, will be amply sufficient to contain, and display to advantage, the large collection belonging to the Society, but the repairs and fitting up, preliminary to the change of situation, will not be completed before the anniversary meeting. The task, therefore, of superintending the arrangements rendered necessary by this change will fall to the part of the Council, to be elected for the ensuing year; though the principal labour will devolve upon the Committees which have been specially deputed to arrange certain departments, it being included in their duties, that they should superintend the removal and arrangement of the articles specially intrusted to them.

The Council would be desirous of following the mode adopted in former Reports, that of stating specifically the increase in each department of the Cabinet, but the reasons already alluded to will, it hopes, prove a sufficient apology for omitting an enumeration which would be of little utility, in consequence of the new arrangements of the objects, and the rejections that must necessarily arise of many of those now contained in the catalogues.

To have enumerated them would have also entailed much unnecessary labour, since, in anticipation of the alterations that are now about to be made, the entry of the names and descriptions of the objects added has been omitted, as not being likely to be of any permanent use, and they have been only reserved in safe keeping till the new arrangement should be completed. To follow the example, then, of former reports, would require a labour unattended with any beneficial result, and would indeed be anticipating that to which special Committees have been appointed. The Council, however, cannot refrain from stating that large additions have been made to the Society's collections. Of these, the most important is unquestionably the handsome and extensive collection of minerals, which the liberality of the Legislature enabled the Society to purchase. The specimens of this collection are of a superior description, the size being that adapted to collections of public bodies, and the extent and variety such as will leave little to be desired for any purpose of general utility, or for the facility of study, or for the purpose of illustrating a course of lectures. Besides the valuable collection acquired by purchase, a considerable number of specimens has been received as donations, and of these many will form an acceptable addition even to the enlarged Cabinet. The Society cannot too often or too openly express its gratitude to those generous lovers of science, who have put themselves to the trouble and expense of collecting objects of art or of natural history, with the view of presenting them as donations to the Society; and not less is due to several individuals, unconnected with this city, who have, notwithstanding, from an earnest wish to assist the cause of science, made donations of value. The Council believes that it will not be supposed to go beyond the wishes of the Society, when, in its name, it tenders its grateful thanks to

the many individuals that have, during the closing year, added to its possessions, donations of various kinds. It trusts that the benefit, which it fondly hopes the Society will be the means of conferring upon the community, will secure a continuance of this most decided proof of the good will of the public, and of their satisfaction in the general management of the affairs of the Institution. Although it is impossible to notice all those who have presented donations of value, the Council begs leave to mention the names of T. A. Begly, Esquire, of this city, and J. J. Langdon, Esquire, of Burlington, as donors of large and valuable series of minerals; and of N. Gould, Esquire, of London, who has several times transmitted objects of curiosity and of utility. It has also pleasure in stating, that during the last summer a donation of minerals, from a sister Society, has been received. The Belfast Natural History Society, small in its outset, like the Institution of which the Council forms a part, has been raised into distinction by the persevering and zealous exertions of a few private individuals. Societies with a kindred object, situated in distant regions of the globe, can be mutually beneficial, and the Council of this Society has not failed to reciprocate the donation received from its Irish contemporary; and it is to be hoped that a connection so auspiciously begun will not be suffered to die away. Captain Bayfield, R. N. by a donation of geological specimens from the lower parts of the St. Lawrence, and William Sheppard, Esquire, of Woodfield, by a donation of dried plants from the environs of Quebec, have conferred obligations on the Society which it is bound to acknowledge. Among the donors of objects of art or curiosity, the Council thinks itself justified in mentioning the name of Captain Stoddard, of the ship *Thames*, of London, who has, on several occasions, made handsome presents to the Society.

The Council is not without hope that the example of Captain Stoddard will be imitated by many of the masters who frequent this port. Few persons have more frequent opportunities of procuring, at little expense, objects of value and interest ; and were the masters of vessels to take up the habit of collecting, a large amount might be quickly amassed. We have examples, in several ports of the United States and elsewhere, of the great utility of interesting in the favour of public museums, the valuable class of mariners. Could this be effected here, the Society would find itself a gainer to a great degree, and the Council hopes that the merchants connected with these gentlemen, (particularly those who are concerned in the West India trade, a country so fertile in all the objects of natural history,) will not be unwilling to recommend to those under their influence, the objects to which allusion has been made. The Council begs leave to trespass a little longer on the patience of the Society in recording the names of E. S. Glen, Esquire, who at much trouble to himself transmitted a number of objects of curiosity connected with the customs of the inhabitants of South America, and of Mr. William Walker, merchant, of Quebec, who was at the pains of transporting from Surinam to Liverpool and from that port to this country, a large case of insects. The Council will only refer to one other donor, a lady, Miss L. D. Dix, of Boston, whose unexpected and liberal donation has been received with a pleasure much beyond the value of the objects themselves, although they were highly useful and interesting.

The Library not requiring any preparation in entering its additions, the Council will mention precisely its increase. The number of volumes mentioned in the Report of the Council for 1829-30, was 365 ; there have been added by purchase 27 volumes, and by donation 11, forming

a total of 403 volumes now possessed by the Society.

Passing from the state of the collections, the Council proceeds to notice the number of Members in connection with the Society. There have been elected during the year, seven Ordinary Members, and eight Corresponding—no Honorary Member has been chosen. The number of Members last year who, as resident, were subject to pay a yearly subscription, was 96 ; those at the present date amount to 90.

The Council has much satisfaction in stating the increase both in the number and merit of the Essays offered in competition for its medals. The Committees to which they were referred have in their reports stated the grounds for withholding or adjudging the different prizes, and although it would appear that the majority of the Essays was not of a kind to meet the wishes of the Society, yet the fact that there were several of considerable merit, affords an index of the utility which this mode of exciting emulation may be productive of. The Council has to regret, that the competition for the medal offered for the best Essay read during the year, at any of the monthly meetings, should have called forth so little exertion on the part of the Members, as well as of others, but it is to be hoped that should the Society judge expedient to continue a similar offer hereafter, that the competition may be such as will require the talents of judges to decide.

Among the proceedings of the year, the Council cannot omit the mention of the course of Lectures on Geology, given last fall by Mr. John Finch, which, from having been numerous attended and from the mode of delivery, must have been useful in turning the minds of the auditors to that interesting branch of science. The Council was induced to procure the services of that gentleman, from

feeling a strong desire to insure the occasional delivery of Lectures on the different branches of science in this city, and from being deeply impressed with the idea of the benefits that might result from them, especially as through them particularly, the younger portion of the community may be expected to devote more time and attention to these just objects of attention, than has hitherto been customary.

The Council will conclude its report by a notice of the financial condition of the Society. By the Report of the Finance Committee, it appears that a very considerable outlay has been made during the last year, amounting to the large sum of £442 5s. 11d. The principal part of this expense arose from the purchase of the cabinet of minerals, and of apparatus and books, and from the purchase and preparation of quadrupeds, birds, and other animals. A large expense is necessarily incurred in the cases, which are indispensable for the preservation and display of these last named objects, so that the expense of the case sometimes equals or exceeds that of the contents themselves. This is unavoidable, as otherwise, from ravages of insects and the changes produced by exposure, they would become entirely useless. The Council is happy to find from the accompanying Report of the Committee, that notwithstanding the large sum expended, a balance of £121 7s. 4½d. still remains in the Treasurer's hands, a considerable part of which is, however, already appropriated.

Finally, it is here necessary to notice the mark of protection, which for the third time has been shewn to this Society by the Legislature of the Province, in voting an aid for the present year of £50 to assist in procuring a suitable building for its reception, and which has not been included in the Treasurer's account. This liberality calls for and the Council has no doubt will receive the warmest re-

turn of thanks from every one connected with the Society, and from the strong desire shown by the Legislature to increase the means of Education, and to foster all attempts towards facilitating the acquirement of knowledge in the superior branches of science, the Society, it is to be expected, will not fail to be still further favoured, provided, of which the Council has no doubt, a judicious application be made of the funds put into its hands, and that the primary objects of the Society, viz. the advancement of the study of Natural History chiefly, but of Science and Literature in general, be kept steadily in view, and that they produce the zeal and ardour which alone can bring about the advancement of the Society, and the benefits it was expected to create.

All which is submitted.

By order of the Council,

A. F. HOLMES, M. D.

Chairman.

May 16, 1831.